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U.S. Department of Justice



Federal Bureau of Investigation

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X

(S)

INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM - USAMA BIN LADEN/AL-QAEDA

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INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY PREPARED: 11/08/2002

BASIS FOR INVESTIGATION:

X

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AL-QAEDA

(U) AL-QAEDA, under the leadership of Usama Bin Laden, has declared holy war on the United States for its "occupation of holy lands" and has issued a total of three fatwas (religiously sanctioned opinions on civil or religious matters), in which it declared the duty of every Muslim to kill Americans, civilian or military, wherever possible.

(U) The name AL-QAEDA, or "the Base," dates back to 1988 and reportedly originated from the term used to refer to one

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of Usama Bin Laden's (UBL) guesthouses, where the Mujahidin that came to fight in Afghanistan were required to register. These registration records later provided extensive contacts to Islamic fighters around the world. AL-QAEDA includes, in addition to the warriors present at Usama Bin Laden's camps, a loose network of terrorist cells throughout the world. The most outstanding features of AL-QAEDA are its international outreach and vast financial resources, derived mainly from Usama Bin Laden's personal wealth and financial dealings.

(U) Usama Bin Laden was raised in Saudi Arabia in a wealthy, high profile, family of Yemeni origins. The beginning of his radicalization dates back to his university studies in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where he was linked to members of the Muslim Brotherhood. Later, his involvement in the Afghan struggle against the Soviet occupation played a major role in shaping his ideology. During this experience, he found a sense of purpose and became deeply religious. Usama Bin Laden also made contacts with Islamic fighters from around the world and participated in a victorious struggle against a secular superpower. The combination of Usama Bin Laden's wealth, connection to, and command over experienced, motivated, and radical Islamic militants, and his fervent anti-U.S. orientation, make him a serious threat to U.S. national security.

(U) AL-QAEDA operated approximately 12 training camps in Afghanistan, in which it has reportedly trained as many as 5,000 militants. These militants have allegedly created cells in 50 countries. Some of these trainees may be "sleeper" agents, who live undetected among local populations.

(U) AL-QAEDA members are familiar with modern communications and have been reported to use encrypted e-mail, cellular phones, satellite communications, and training manuals on CD-ROMs. The group emphasizes the symbolic value of targets when making its selection, e.g., U.S. embassies, World Trade Center, military barracks, USS Cole, etc.

(U) The U.S. State Department currently links AL-QAEDA to many recent terrorist attacks, among them the World Trade Center bombing (02/1993); the attacks in Riyadh (11/1995) and Dhahran (06/1996), Saudi Arabia; the assassination attempt on Egyptian President Mubarak in Ethiopia (06/1995); the near-simultaneous bombings of the U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania (08/1998); and the bombing of the USS Cole in Yemen (11/2000).

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(U) AL-QAEDA may have several hundred to several thousand members. AL-QAEDA serves as a focal point or umbrella organization for a worldwide network that includes, among others, many Sunni Islamic extremist groups such as EGYPTIAN ISLAMIC JIHAD, some members of AL-GAMA'AT AL-ISLAMIYYA, the ISLAMIC MOVEMENT OF UZBEKISTAN, and the HAKKAT UL-MUJAHIDIN. AL-QAEDA has a worldwide reach, has cells in a number of countries, and is reinforced by its ties to Sunni extremist networks. Usama Bin Laden and his key lieutenants resided in Afghanistan, and the group maintained terrorist training camps there. Due to law enforcement activities and the military campaign, entitled "Operation Enduring Freedom," AL-QAEDA has suffered a significant disruption, including the demise or capture of hierarchical members of AL-QAEDA. The current whereabouts of Usama Bin Laden is unknown.

INVESTIGATION TO DATE

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